



NEWS RELEASE

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Kernan awards grant to support Columbus area hospitals

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. – Gov. Joe Kernan announced today that 65 workers at two Columbus-area hospitals will be able to upgrade their skills thanks to a \$67,808 Advance Indiana grant from the Department of Workforce Development.

In September 2002, a consortium of local leaders met to discuss the training needs of the area's healthcare workforce. After conducting a study of area hospitals and major long-term care facilities in a six-county area, it became apparent that the demand for healthcare workers would exceed the available workforce within a few short years. As a result, Columbus health care leaders proposed a training initiative in conjunction with the Community Education Coalition (CEC) to help incumbent workers pursue educational opportunities in nursing and other health care programs.

"On-the-job education like this is important as our population continues to age and the need for qualified healthcare workers continues to grow," said Kernan. "We applaud the efforts of the Community Education Coalition and leaders in the Columbus area for bringing these hospitals together so existing workers can pursue new opportunities in the workplace."

Leveraged by a \$126,000 match by the CEC, the grant will allow 49 employees of Columbus Regional Hospital and 16 workers at Schneck Medical Center to pursue various healthcare credentials such as associate and bachelor degrees in nursing and certifications in licensed practical nursing, occupational therapy and physical therapy.

"We are delighted that we could secure this grant on behalf of Columbus Regional Hospital and Schneck Medical Center, which support hospital employees who are pursuing healthcare degrees," said John Burnett, president of the Community Education Coalition. "And, we are grateful to Governor Kernan and the Department of Workforce Development for investing in education that directly links to economic viability."

The Advance Indiana grant program is designed to provide financial assistance to companies and organizations committed to expanding the skills of their existing workforce through training programs that result in industry-recognized credentials. It is specifically targeted to companies or organizations within Energize Indiana's four industry clusters: advanced manufacturing, life sciences, high tech distribution and information technology.

Through its various programs and initiatives, the Indiana Department of Workforce Development is charged with continually improving the Hoosier workforce by assisting companies create new jobs and improve employee skills. The agency offers a variety of training and educational grants, works with the state's 27 WorkOne Centers, administers the unemployment insurance system, provides labor market information, assists employers with preparing workers for layoffs and closures and operates the a statewide job placement service.

For more information on this or other DWD programs, contact Jeff Harris at 317/232-3396 or visit the web site at www.workforce.IN.gov.

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